

The NFL Draft

- Dan Rosenberg

The NFL draft came and went this past weekend; with it every year comes an interesting mix of uplifting and also sad stories. First round pick D.J. Hayden almost died last year on the football field after tearing a vein in his heart. A few short months later, he's had all of his dreams come true. And on the other side of the spectrum we have Tyrann Mathieu, who squandered his chances as a first round pick because of his multiple marijuana-related arrests. The draft is full of story lines that are more interesting than the football after effects themselves.

The reason the draft is so enticing, at least to me, is that the potential players are just kids. These 19-22 year-olds are essentially chosen into the only career most of them will ever have. But there's also a scary aspect to that. With all of the research going into head injuries, and the trauma caused by football, what will happen to these men, barely older than high schoolers?

Does it matter though? Do they care about the possible effect on their bodies and minds? At least right now, the simple answer is often no. The pushback from the players themselves is that the possibility of injury is the cost of having a career in the game that they love. I think that's something that connects to everyone. We all have a dream job, and these men are the lucky few who get to live their childhood fantasies. The risk, at least to many of these players, is far outweighed by the reward of making millions in a football career.

I think that's what connects with me most about these draftees. It's the sheer joy that I see when they get their names called, when they realize that some team is going to give them a shot at playing football professionally. More than the teams, the owners, and the coaches, even more than the fantastic and unbelievable stories, the draft is about college kids finally getting to realize their dreams. It's inspiring, it's exciting, and it really is must see television.